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ABSTRACT

For this study, four criterion variables were defined to assess student perceptions of school during a period of judicial mandated school desegregation. These four variables were student perceptions of (1) school environment, (2) interaction between black students and white students, (3) interaction between teachers and students, and (4) interaction between students and students. These perceptions were measured through the use of the Student Needs Assessment Survey, 1982-83. The survey instrument was administered to a random sample of students in grades two through eleven in six metropolitan township school districts in Marion County, Indiana. The purpose of this study was to determine if two selected factors were associated with student perceptions of these four school-related criterion variables. "Grade in school" and "parental concern for school" were the selected factors (predictor variables). The significance of the relationships between the two factors and the four criterion variables were tested separately for black and white students by using simple, first-order partial, and multiple correlation coefficients. All correlation coefficients were evaluated by using a replication design. It was found that all four student perceptions of school were related to parental concern, while two were related to grade level. (Author/GC)

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FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL DURING MANDATED DESEGREGATION

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Abstract

For this study, four criterion variables were defined to assess student perceptions of school during a period of judicial mandated school desegregation. These four variables were student perceptions of school environment, interaction between black students and white students, interaction between teachers and students, and interaction between students and students. These perceptions were measured through the use of the Student Needs Assessment Survey, 1982-83. The survey instrument was administered to a random sample of students in grades two through eleven in six metropolitan township school districts in Marion County, Indiana. The purpose of this study was to determine if two selected factors were associated with student perceptions of these four school-related criterion variables. "Grade in school" and "parental concern for school" were the selected factors (predictor variables).

The significance of the relationships between the two factors and the four crierion variables were tested separately for black and white students by using simple, first-order partial, and multiple correlation coefficients. All correlation coefficients were evaluated by using a replication design.

FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL DURING MANDATED DESEGREGATION

In the study which Reid (1984) has just presented, a considerable effort was undertaken to collect the data and to prepare a report which was parallel to the study during the first year of the mandated one way busing. Our paper is an extension of that effort which attempts to further clarify the information that was gained from the overall effort.

The research team classified the items into subscales based upon a content analysis. Those items for which there was agreed upon subscale classification by the research team became its subscales. For the purpose of this adjunct study, four of the subscales which emerged from the content analysis were used to describe the schools as perceived by the students. These subscales and example items for each subscale were:

Subscale -- School Environment

Example Items:
1. There are lots of things to do here at school that are fun.
2. I like to come to school.
3. I feel proud about the school I'm going to this year.

Subscale -- Interaction between Black Students and White Students

Example Items:
1. I sit next to both Black students and White students at lunch.
2. The teachers treat Black students and White students the same.
3. We have talked about desegregation at school.

Subscale -- Interaction between teachers and students

Example Items:
1. If I have a problem, the teacher will help me.
2. I feel that the teachers try to help me at this school.
3. I think that the teachers at this school understand me.

Subscale -- Interaction between students and students

Example Items:
1. I get to see my friends at school.
2. I have lots of friends at this school.
3. I have made many friends since I began coming to this school.

It was assumed that these four subscales were directly reflective of the schooling process and were appropriate to use as criterion measures. If factors could be identified that were related to these four criterion measures, then there would be further clarification of the findings from the overall study.

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether grade level and parental concern for school or parental involvement were two such factors. In the case of grade level, substantial evidence had been found during the item by item analysis. There were clear and distinct trends of differences across grade levels for individual items. The general trends seemed to be similar--that student perceptions were more positive among students in the lower grades. Parental concern for school as a second factor for this study was not directly evident in the overall analysis. It was suggested by both previous research and strong hunches. For example, Phi Delta Kappa's Practical Applications of Research Newsletter (1981) cited related research. It reported that Henderson (1981) had just published an annotated bibliography that included 35 studies, each of which

indicated that parent involvement is associated with gains in student achievement, and which taken together suggest strongly that without legitimate parent involvement, schools will not succeed as well as they could. Other studies were cited which show that student attitudes are critical factors in achievement and these attitudes are formed and reinforced within the family. Yet in an another study, Wagenaar (1977) was cited for a study that he had conducted in a large midwestern school system to see if there was a relationship between schoolwide achievement and the level of community involvement and support. It was found that there was such a relationship. And finally, Gordon, et. al. (1978) found in a study on the Follow Through Program that most forms of parental involvement help, but that the more comprehensive the involvement and the longer it lasts the more effective it is.

In this study, a subscale on parental concern for school was defined by the research team during the content analysis. Three example items of this subscale were:

Subscale -- Parental Concern

Example Items:
1. My parent(s) come to parent/teacher meetings.
2. My parent(s) have talked to some of my teachers.
3. My parent(s) care about my schoolwork.

Correlation coefficients between the two factors (grade level and parental concern) and the four criterion measures were computed separately for black students and white students utilizing a replication design. Simple correlation coefficients, multiple correlation coefficients, and first order partial correlation coefficients (parental concern holding grade level

constant) were computed. This latter decision was made because it was known that the level of parental concern is not the same across grade levels.

As descriptive information, the means, standard deviations, and reliability coefficients for each of the variables are reported in Table 1.

(Insert Table 1 here)

It was found that most of the mean differences of Black students and White students were relatively small with only the differences for school environment and possibly interaction between students and students as worth noting. The standard deviations and reliability coefficients were judged to be very similar. The reliability coefficients were judged to be sufficiently high to permit a reliable test of the relationships between the two factors and the four criterion variables.

In Table 2, simple or zero order correlation coefficients, multiple correlation coefficients, and first order partial correlation coefficients are reported for the four criterion measures. Since a replication design was used by randomly dividing the Black student sample and the White student sample into two samples, all relationships between the two factors and four criterion measures are replicated.

(Insert Table 2 here)

For the two criterion measures of school environment and

interaction between teachers and students, all the simple correlation coefficients were found to be significant. For the criterion measure of interaction between Black students and White students, the simple correlation coefficient with parental concern was found to be significant for both Black students and White students. However, the simple correlation coefficient with grade level was not as clear. It was not significant for Black students and not significant for one of the samples of White students. For the criterion measure of interaction between students and students, the simple correlation coefficient with parental concern was found to be significant for both Black students and White Students, but the simple correlation coefficient with grade level was not significant.

The first order partial correlation coefficients between parental concern, holding grade level constant, and each of the four criterion measures were found to be significant and were replicated. That is, this result was found for each of the four samples.

In summary, it was concluded that these four student perceptions of school were related to parental concern and in the case of two of the student perceptions of school to grade level.

These findings seem consistent with the studies cited earlier and are not surprising in view of the research studies such as the effect of parental participation in a parent group on a child's self-concept. For example, Summerlin and Ward (1978) have reported an experimental study in which it was found that parent participation in a parent training group contributed to their children's higher self-concept scores compared to the score

of children whose parents had not yet attended the parent training sessions.

Previous research plus evidence that was found during this data collection and analysis effort suggest that school desegregation efforts might be helped through the direct involvement of parents. At least, in so far as the effort is reflected in the four criterion measures identified by this research team.

FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL
DURING MANDATED DESEGREGATION

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FACTORS RELATED TO STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL
DURING MANDATED DESEGREGATION

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND
RELIABILITY COEFFICIENTS OF VARIABLES BY RACE

Variables	N	M	S	R
BLACK STUDENTS				
Factors (Predictor)				
Grade Level	1457	5.7	2.5	---
Parental Concern	1423	3.9	1.0	.40
Criterion				
School Environment	1298	6.4	3.1	.77
Black Student/White Student Interaction	1343	3.8	1.4	.44
Teacher/Student Interaction	1231	15.2	3.7	.80
Student/Student Interaction	1324	7.9	2.3	.68
WHITE STUDENTS				
Factors (Predictors)				
Grade Level	2748	6.1	2.6	---
Parental Concern	2709	4.1	1.0	.46
Criterion				
School Environment	2554	8.1	2.6	.70
Black Student/White Student Interaction	2610	3.6	1.4	.43
Teacher/Student Interaction	2439	16.0	3.6	.82
Student/Student Interaction	2579	8.8	2.1	.70

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TABLE 2
SIMPLE, MULTIPLE, AND FIRST ORDER
PARTIAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN FACTORS
(PREDICTOR VARIABLES) AND CRITERION VARIABLES BY RACE

Criterion Variables / Predictor Variables	Samples: Black A	Black B	White A	White B
School Environment				
Grade Level	-.31	-.27	-.24	-.27
Parental Concern	.30	.28	.29	.31
Grade Level + Parental Concern	.37	.33	.31	.34
Parental Concern (Grade Level)	.21	.21	.21	.22
Black Student/White Student Interaction				
Grade Level	-.10	-.04	-.15	-.11
Parental Concern	.26	.19	.21	.19
Grade Level + Parental Concern	.26	.19	.22	.19
Parental Concern (Grade Level)	.24	.19	.16	.16
Teacher/Student Interaction				
Grade Level	-.26	-.25	-.34	-.33
Parental Concern	.34	.32	.34	.37
Grade Level + Parental Concern	.36	.35	.40	.41
Parental Concern (Grade Level)	.27	.25	.22	.27
Student/Student Interaction				
Grade Level	.03	.04	.02	.01
Parental Concern	.13	.17	.14	.15
Grade Level + Parental Concern	.15	.20	.17	.17
Parental Concern (Grade Level)	.15	.20	.17	.17